

Education Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: HB-6559

AN ACT IMPLEMENTING THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE OFFICE OF

Title: EARLY CHILDHOOD.

Vote Date: 3/15/2021

Vote Action: Joint Favorable Substitute

PH Date: 3/8/2021

File No.:

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

Education Committee

REASONS FOR BILL:

This bill puts in place the technical changes suggested by the Office of Early Childhood.

Sections 1-3: Adds diversity goals to school readiness programs. Expands the type of entity that can receive school readiness financial assistance. School readiness councils must be 25% parents of school readiness eligible children, they must take steps to ensure that diversity reflects their region, and their chairperson will be elected.

Section 5: Expands the possible entities the state can enter into a contract with for financial assistance to help develop a child care facility.

Sections 7-10: Edits background check requirements for a range of facility types.

Sections 11-14: Specifies that home visitation models meet criteria for effectiveness developed by the federal Department of Health and Human Services.

Section 15: Authorizes the education commissioner to permit any persons who hold a teaching endorsement in specified fields to teach within the birth-to-three program.

Section 16: Creates a notification and hearing process for youth camp operators who OEC has cited for operating without a license

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

Beth Bye, Commissioner, Office of Early Childhood:

The legislative changes are aimed at accomplishing the following goals: (1) Elevating the voices of families with young children to ensure state-funded early care and education is meeting family and community needs. (2) Advancing racial equity and transparency in decision-making care through changes to School Readiness Councils. (3) Create mechanisms to address a shortage of high-quality infant and toddler child care. (4) Increase financial stability for state-funded child care providers.

Sarah Healy Eagan, Acting Child Advocate, Office of the Child Advocate:

Expanding supports for pregnant women and new caregivers is essential as caregivers may present with a range of needs that impact the health and development of their child. Support for peri-natal services, including home visiting for pregnant women and babies is a necessary strategy for reducing health inequities and preventing child fatalities. Legislators can ensure that existing and proposed budget proposals regarding Medicaid, housing support, food distribution, etc., include specific plans to address the needs of pregnant women and young children during and post-COVID-19.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

John L. Cattelan, Executive Director, Connecticut Alliance of YMCA's

Keith Garbart, Connecticut Camping Association

Denise Learned, CEO, Camp Hazen YMCA

We support section 9 of this bill, which requires background checks for over-18 camp counselors, but we request this requirement be waived or modified for international camp counselors, who already need to provide the required background check information in order to receive a visa at the embassy. With the limited resources our camps currently face, we do not want to invest assets in a process that we know will not result in any findings. The CCA notes that they will not support this bill if it includes fingerprinting requirements.

Izzi Greenberg, Executive Director, Middlesex Coalition for Children: This bill strengthens the Office of Early Childhood and its ability to serve our community. All these elements bring us one step closer to a system that works for more of Connecticut's children.

Marlo Greponne, Executive Director, Human Resources Agency of New Britain, Inc.:

We support increasing resources to support parent and family engagement for enhancing quality of services to children across the State. HRA is a long-term successful provider of school readiness, and childcare services for nearly 800 children annually and we have a history of valuing, supporting, and incorporating parent voice in the design and delivery of programming to best meet the needs of children.

Connecticut Early Childhood Funder Collaborative:

We are committed to working with public and private partners across the state to improve the state's early care and education system. This bill seeks to improve our early care and education system through broader voice in decision making, recognition of the important role of family childcare providers and explicitly noting the need to address racial and ethnic inequity will be important as Connecticut.

Lauren Ruth, Research and Policy Director, Connecticut Voices for Children:

To ensure an equitable and robust economic recovery from the pandemic, the state of Connecticut must build a system of universal access to early child care, and the federal government must build a universal early child care system. This bill would make Connecticut's early child care system more equitable and economically sustainable for women of color and more accessible for low-income families.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

Andrew Feinstein, Chair, Special Education Equity for Kids in Connecticut:

Expanding the jurisdiction of the Office of Early Childhood from birth-to-three to birth-to-five raises enormous complications with relationship to special education services under the IDEA and, in so doing, appears to substantially curtail the rights of parents. he proposed change from Birth to Three to Birth to Five poses too many unresolved issues as to Connecticut's implementation of Part B and Part C of the IDEA to enact.

Ronald Goodmaster:

These are efforts to teach children before they are developmentally ready.

Reported by: Dallas Emerle

Date: 3/19/2021